



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

principles ; might send his soul along that tide of impetuous passion in which novelties are struggling with prejudices, without being overwhelmed in its foaming flood ; and in the comprehensive grasp of his intellect might include all classes, all sects, all professions, making them stand out on his luminous page in the clear light of reality, doing justice to all by allowing each its own costume and language, compelling Falsehood to give itself the lie, and Pride to stand abased before its own image, and guided in all his pictures of life and character by a spirit at once tolerant, just, generous, humane, and national.

ART. VI. — *The Prometheus and Agamemnon of Æschylus, translated into English Verse.* By HENRY WILLIAM HERBERT. Cambridge: John Bartlett. 1849. 12mo. pp. 156.

THE plays of Æschylus have intrinsic difficulties, growing out of the peculiar character of the poet, as well as outward difficulties, belonging to the state of the text, which make the translator's task a problem of great labor. The first class of difficulties occur, more or less, in all of the remaining pieces of the greatest master of the Attic tragedy ; the second are found less in the *Prometheus*, and most of all in the *Agamemnon*. The former play, for reasons all of which we do not probably know, has fared much better at the hands of the copyists and scholiasts ; while the latter has been so corrupted that, in many places, a remedy is utterly hopeless ; conjectural approximations being all that is possible with regard to the text, and harmonizing or comparative interpretation all that is possible with regard to the sense.

Besides the accidental and inevitable corruptions wrought by time, and the carelessness or ignorance of copyists, there were other changes traceable to a higher origin ; namely, to the Greek Dramatic poets themselves, who often retouched and reproduced their pieces, and to their successors, who worked over again the productions of the older masters, and adapted them to the requirements of the contemporary stage.

With all these sources of error, an inexperienced scholar might be led into a deep and general skepticism as to the substantial genuineness of any of the remains of Greek literature. And yet, the more profoundly we study these mighty works, the more thoroughly satisfied are we that we have the form and pressure of the intellects which produced them. No competent scholar, unbiased by partial theories, can doubt for a moment the genuineness of any of the remaining plays of Æschylus or Sophocles, or any of the principal plays of Euripides. They are so deeply marked, every one of them, with the grand characteristics of their authors, that the well-trained perceptions of the classical scholar cannot fail to discern them, in spite of doubtful or various readings, contradictory interpretations, and unquestionable corruptions of the text. Men have two tendencies which come successively into play in all such matters; one is a passion for amending, altering, and adapting; the other is that, when wearied with this, and returning from the periodical aberrations to the periodical triumphs of taste, they reject the forged additions, and take back into favor the genuine works of other times, with all their old-fashioned aspect and their real faults. We have had this experience with Shakspeare. The better taste of the present age has demanded the restoration of the Poet of Avon to the form in which he delighted the vigorous and manly spirits, whose star-like assemblage cast such a brilliancy over the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Tate's alterations of the mighty master, which pleased a conventional age—where are they now? Found in the notes to critical editions, inserted for the amusement of curious readers; and edition after edition is published, in which the ablest scholars task themselves, first to restore the true readings of the immortal dramatist, and secondly, reverently to interpret them when ascertained by laborious collation. Some conservative influence of this kind no doubt existed in antiquity, besides the public regulations for depositing copies of the three dramatists in the public archives, and before the critical labors of the Alexandrian scholars; so that we scarcely read a page of either poet without recognizing the soaring and magnificent genius of the Pythagorean Æschylus; the calm and exquisite elegance hiding the fires of the consummate artist, Sophocles; or the fluent passion and eloquent philosophy which some-

what let down the lofty position of the Tragic Muse, in Euripides.

This is not the place to discuss the character of Æschylus and his general relations to the tragic art of his own and subsequent times; nor do we propose to consider the critical merits of the various editions of the original. The translations of the *Prometheus Fettered* and the *Agamemnon* are all we have to do with at present; and of these we shall aim only to give a cursory account.

Our readers are aware, that the notions of a translator's duty are not yet well settled in any nation. Different opinions have been urged in our own pages, the question being considered among poets and literary men as still an open one. But all will confess that the translator who, adhering closely to the words of the original, renders them at the same time with idiomatic spirit and ease into his mother tongue, unenfeebled by dilution, and undistorted by being wrought into forms foreign to the genius of the author; who makes a spirited work under all the disadvantages of transplantation to a foreign tongue, — such a translator, all must admit, has solved the highest problem of his art. It will be generally agreed, we think, that some peculiar difficulties exist in the task of so translating the works of the ancients, as that the readers whose tastes have not been cultivated by the processes of education into a love of antiquity for its own sake shall find them interesting without the stimulus of the current style and mannerisms of the day. A tone of venerable age must be maintained as one of the prime requisites of a good translation from the Greek or Latin; and yet, in the Greek at least, if the translator will be true to his original, he must preserve a grace and freedom incompatible with cumbrous movement, and remote from levity. Any thing approaching the neologisms which even the best writers of our age unconsciously indulge in, the least suspicion of a cant phrase springing from the peculiar relations of modern society, will destroy the effect of any translation from the ancients. A language like our own, which has a poetical literature running through as many centuries as intervened between Homer and the Attic tragedians; or like the German, which ranges through even a longer sweep of time, from the *Nibelungen-lied* down to Goethe and Schiller; may furnish, from its copious vocabulary, the words which, through

their old poetic associations, shall give nearly the effect of antiquity. Other modern languages have less facility and inferior capacity in this respect. The scholar, therefore, who aims to transfuse the fine essence of a work of ancient poetry into English, must carefully prepare himself by drinking deep at the perennial fountains—the fresh gushing streams, in the early ages of his mother tongue.

We are surprised, however, at the comparatively feeble execution which has hitherto been the most striking characteristic of English translations from the ancient languages. The reader will readily call to mind the transformations of the Attic Tragedians by Potter and Franklin; the exquisite modern recasting of Homer by Pope; the more faithful, but less attractive, reproduction of the same old bard by Cowper; and the stiff compound of the two by Sotheby. By far the best translation of the *Iliad* is the one in blank verse by an accomplished American, the late Mr. Munford of Virginia. Recently, however, several attempts to reform the errors of English translators have been made, with various degrees of success. Some have even gone with the Germans so far as to introduce imitations of the ancient poetical rhythms; a difficult thing to do with precision, since it is scarcely possible to supply by accented measures an equivalent for the determinate quantities, fixed by musical laws as the basis of the poetic art in ancient times. But very pleasing effects have been produced by the accented hexameters into which several books of the *Iliad* were translated a few years since by a writer in Blackwood, who, we trust, will go on and finish a work he has so ably begun.

The Germans have been led by the greater flexibility of their language, and by its greater facility in the formation of compounds, much beyond the limited efforts of the English in the reproduction of modern equivalents for ancient rhythms. Scarcely a form of ancient versification remains unattempted by the laborious and conscientious scholars of that lettered nation; sometimes the difficulties have been overcome with admirable ingenuity and success; but, frequently, as they themselves confess, and some of them bitterly complain, the spirit of ancient poetry evaporates from the translator's crucible, and the elegant forms in which it was clothed by the old masters vanish amidst the writhing contortions through

which the German language is forced in the vain attempt to imitate with imperfect means the airy graces and rhythmical movements belonging to remote ages and to very different conditions of language. Many of the German metrical versions are totally unintelligible without the originals. Even Voss, with his wonderfully plastic power over the forms of language, frequently makes Homer awkward, stiff, artificial, and ungainly. The accomplished and able William Humboldt, master as he was of every form of speech, failed here, notwithstanding all his learning. The error of the English, speaking in general terms, consists in having no principle at all; the error of the Germans, on the other hand, consists in pushing a correct principle too far. The English have endeavored to obliterate every vestige of characteristic qualities from the works which they have translated, so that the unlearned reader should never suspect them to have had a foreign and ancient origin; the Germans have striven with superior industry to prevent the unlearned reader from suspecting them to be any thing in the world but Greek; and, indeed, it may be said with almost literal truth, that they are all Greek to him.

It might naturally be supposed that, of all the ancient poets, Æschylus would be the worst treated by the translators; and so he was by the earlier ones. But the returning taste of the age for natural effects in the poetic art, as distinguished from the artificial brilliancy of the last century, and from the morbid intensity which marked the commencement of the present, has led to a keener study of Shakspeare, and connected with this fresh appreciation of the *one* dramatic poet of the world, a more critical examination of the great remains of the Hellenic Shakspeare, and more successful attempts to set him, in some intelligible and befitting form, before the English literary public. The recent translations have generally been limited to single plays, and several of them have attained a measure of success highly creditable to the learning and genius of their authors; but some of them again have exhibited a very faulty estimate of the true characteristics of a genuine translation, and very indifferent powers of execution. Editions of the works of Æschylus entire, and of single plays, prepared by able scholars, and illustrated by all the light which the comprehensive range of philologi-

cal studies in the present age has thrown on the obscurities of ancient literature, have led to a corresponding improvement in the spirit and manner of translating. There remains still much to be done before the literature of the English language will be enriched by complete and adequate representatives — representatives in form as well as in spirit — of the great poets of antiquity.

The volume of Mr. Herbert, containing his translations of the Prometheus Fettered and the Agamemnon, is a remarkable work. Mr. Herbert has long been known to the American reading world, as a writer of great and versatile powers; a poet of vivid imagination and vigorous style; a successful novelist; an able and accomplished critic; and, to another class, whose reading is comparatively limited, — the Nimrods of the land, — as a consummate master of the mysteries of their craft, practically experienced in all the ways of shooting, fishing, and hunting; and skilled to illustrate, alike with pen and pencil, the scenes of forest, river, lake, and hill, amidst which *his* amusements and their serious pursuits chiefly lie. And now he comes before the world in another character, that of translator of the most difficult of the Attic tragedians. The volume is appropriately inscribed, in an elegant dedication to Edward Everett, one of the most finished classical scholars in the United States. In a well-written letter addressed to the same gentleman, Mr. Herbert presents a brief, but comprehensive and accurate, account of the Greek dramatic representations, and expounds the principles on which his translations of these two masterpieces have been executed. As the passage is tersely expressed, and involves considerations of importance which should be carefully weighed by every translator, we quote the material paragraphs.

“The principal object which I proposed to myself in the following translations was, to convey as nearly as possible to the English reader, not only the letter, but the spirit, of the original; the rules which I laid down to myself were perfect literalness, an avoidance of paraphrase, circumlocution, and amplification, to the utmost extent admitted by the structure of the English language; and above all, even if it should be necessary to add *words* in order to convey the sense, never to interpolate *ideas*.

“It struck me, that, in all former translations of the Greek dramas, the use of regular set English metres and stanzaic

forms, for the representation of irregular though corresponding strophes and antistrophes, prevented the reader from forming any true idea of the Greek choral modes, and rendered it impossible to preserve the brevity and terseness of the original. I therefore determined to render them as nearly to the measures of the original as the difference between a quantitative language like the Greek, and one purely accentual like the English, would admit.

"In the next place, I have adopted throughout the Hellenic names of the Hellenic divinities, never having been able to discover the slightest grounds for emasculating the grand Titanic Gods of the old Greek Olympus into the formal deities of the Latin mythology. There is no more in common between the Zeus and Here, the Ares and Artemis, of Greece, and the Jupiter and Juno, the Mars and Diana, of Rome, than there is of similitude between Æschylus and Seneca; and writing of the Hellenic Gods, I have chosen to designate them as they were known to the Hellenes of Hellas. For the same cause, I have reverted in all Greek proper names to the Greek terminations *os* and *e*, in lieu of the Latin *us* and *a*; to the Greek diphthongs *ai* and *oi*, in lieu of the Latin *æ* and *œ*; and lastly, to the Greek *k*, in place of the Latin *c*; bringing the whole system of nomenclature, both of persons and places, as nearly as possible to the true Hellenic standard. The only exception is in the few Greek adjectives which have become so engrafted on our language as to be now almost English words, which to alter or amend would appear an affectation. For, detesting all affectations, there is none which I hold so detestable as that of setting up for neologizer or improver of the English tongue; deeming it probable that such men as Shakspeare and Milton, Jeremy Taylor and the translators of the Oxford Bible, are not one iota less likely to have understood the principles of the great language which they have rendered immortal, than any obscure country schoolmaster who chooses to compile, or any pragmatistical printers who choose to force upon the world a standard of lexicography."

Each play is prefaced by an introduction in which the plan is unfolded, and the dramatic characters delineated. The first in the volume is the *Prometheus Fettered*. Of the recent translations of this play, we believe that of Miss Elizabeth B. Barrett, (now Mrs. Browning,) has attracted the most attention. For so good a Greek scholar, and so distinguished a poet as she has proved herself to be, it is remarkably full of errors and prose; — but, perhaps, not remarkably

full of affectations, all things considered. An example combining all three will not be out of place.

— σταθευτὸς δ' ἡλίου φοίβῃ φλογί
Χροῖας ἀμείψεις ἄνθος, (l. 22, 23.)

Miss Barrett renders,

“ — where 'stablished
Neath the fierce sun, thy brow's white flower shall fade.”

Mr. Herbert, literally and more poetically,

“ — burnt by the sun's scorching blaze,
Thy skin's fair flower shalt change.”

There has been one translation of the Prometheus Fettered published in this country before Mr. Herbert's. It was written for that whimsical and short-lived monthly — the Dial — by Mr. Henry Thoreau, a scholar of talent, but of such pertinacious oddity in literary matters, that his writings will never probably do him any justice. This translation was executed with ability, but not being in the poetical form, is scarcely subject to criticism as a work of art, and cannot be brought into any fair comparison with Mr. Herbert's.

The supposed resemblance between the character of Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the character of Prometheus in the play of Æschylus, as well as its extraordinary splendor as a poetical creation, has long rendered this piece a favorite with English scholars; and it is a little surprising, under such circumstances, that it should not have been well translated until the task was undertaken by Mr. Herbert. The manner in which this writer has adapted his style to the character of these two plays is worthy of the highest commendation. It is fine, nervous, idiomatic English, of steel-like clearness, flexibility, and strength. He shows an intimate acquaintance with the best old English writers, as well as a profound study of the genius of Æschylus. In the adaptation of English rhythms to the varied changes of thought and manner in the original, Mr. Herbert shows extraordinary skill, and has attained success beyond that of any among his predecessors. In our judgment, he has carried out the principles laid down in his introductory letter with entire and unbroken consistency. In the treatment of difficult and disputed passages, he has been guided by the blended lights of critical sagacity and poetical instinct. To some of his decisions on the

interpretation of passages of this description objections on critical grounds may be made ; and in one or two places, we should dissent from his renderings on general æsthetic principles ; but in no place has he hurried over the points without careful consideration, or adopted views for which he has not strong reasons to give. The mere English reader will derive, from the study of this volume, not only an idea of the general plan and development of these two tragedies, a conception of the dramatic personages, and the motives of their actions, but he will find that he has also acquired a living conception of the Hellenic modes of thought, and of the peculiar local coloring which distinguishes them. We have not a style of expression which the translator fancies the author would have used had he been an Englishman ; but we have set before us the style of expression of Æschylus himself, transferred into the most poetical, terse, and vigorous English. We will justify what we have said by two short passages from the *Prometheus*. The first is a part of a speech of Prometheus, commencing

ἐπεὶ με καὶ κασιγνήτου τίχαι, (l. 347.)

which we beg our classical readers to read first as a passage from an original poem, and then to compare it word by word with Æschylus.

“ For, of a truth, my brother’s weariful fate
Afflicts me ; Atlas’, who stands far i’ the west,
And long hath stood, on his brawny shoulders broad
Propping the earthfast pillar of the skies,
Burden prodigious. Nor do I pity not,
Whom I saw once, the hostile giant grim,
The earthborn inmate of Kilikian caves,
The hundred-headed, violently quelled,
Impetuous Typhon. Against all the Gods
He stood defiant, from his terrible jaws
Hissing red slaughter, flashing from his eyes
The lurid glare of lightning, e’en as who
The realm of Zeus by force should overthrow.
But him erewhile the sleepless shaft of God,
The headlong thunderbolt outbreathing flame,
Overtook, and smote him sheer from his loud vaunts
Blasphemous. For, to his right mind scourged back
His might was thunderstruck and scorched to dust.
And now, a worthless and dishonored trunk,
Outstretched hard by the billowy strait he lies,

Crushed underneath the roots of Aitna old,
 Where, sitting on the loftiest peaks sublime,
 Hephaistos plies his stithy ; whence burst out
 Rivers of fire sometime, with savage jaws
 Devouring sweet Sikelia's liliated lawns.
 With such fell vengeance Typhon still o'erboils,
 And desolating storms of flame-breathed hate
 Insatiate, although thunderstruck of Zeus.
 But thou nor ignorant art, nor needest me
 To teach thee. Save thyself as best thou canst ;
 And I my present lot will bravely bear
 Until the soul of Zeus from rage shall rest." pp. 31, 32.

And the second passage is the wild lyrical strain with which the Prometheus closes. We give in a note the parallel extract from Miss Barrett.*

"It is done ! For in deed, and no longer in word,
 The firm earth is shaken.
 Far crashes the roar of the bellowing thunder,
 And forth flash the circlets of sulphurous fire,
 And the eddy dust-clouds whirl higher and higher,
 And the storm-winds leap out in their dreadful array,
 Raving hoarse through the sky, and ocean and ether
 Insanely together are hurled.
 So surely, so fearlessly, launched from above
 Comes the havoc of Zeus. O Glory, O Love,
 Of my mother prophetic, — O liberal air,
 That revolest the light and the life of the world,
 Behold how unjustly I bear !

Of the Agamemnon, at least nine or ten English translations have appeared within a few years. Like Goethe's *Faust*, it has been regarded as a problem for the solution of which all the resources of scholarship, the ingenuity of con-

* Miss Barrett has ruined the effect by substituting iambic for anapæstic rhythms.

"In deed — in word no more —
 From her stillness earth is thrust !
 And growls the thunder's echoed roar ;
 And glares the lightning's eddied fire ;
 And the whirlwinds wheel the dust ;
 And blasts of every wind outleap,
 Each to each with confluent ire ;
 And air is mingled with the deep.
 Such fearful curses visibly
 Jove's right-hand impelleth hither.
 O, my mother's pride ! — O, æther !
 To all light-rolling ; dost thou see
 How I suffer wrongfully ?

jecture, and the fire of poetical genius are to be called upon. And so indeed it is. While the great features of the play stand so prominently forward that we are overwhelmed with awe as we contemplate the all but unapproachable sublimity of the author's genius, there are many details in the filling up of the picture which perplex us in the extreme. We tremble at the mighty and inscrutable Destiny which overshadows the Atreidan house; the dark, mysterious forebodings of the chorus, that terrible woe is about to fall on the head of Agamemnon; the frightful vision that "hovers before the heart evermore, and the prophetic, unbidden, unhired strain" that haunts them; the gigantic guilt of Clytemnestra, which prepares for her returning lord the inextricable net; the unintelligible horrors which Cassandra, condemned by the angry god to predict the truth to those who understood it not, pours forth, as she beholds in frantic vision the ghosts of the children murdered for the Thyestean banquet; the tremendous scenes which shed a lurid light upon the enigmas inexplicable save by the event; — these and all the other great points in the tragedy we clearly comprehend. But sometimes a sentence is distorted beyond the hope of setting it right; sometimes the very elevation of the poet's thought seems to transcend his expressive power, and language falters under the oppressive weight of ideas too big for utterance, and of imagery too grand and lofty to be brought within the compass of clear and intelligible representation. So that, while we have, on the whole, an astonishingly impressive and vivid conception of a work which may be said to be not tragic, but tragedy itself, we find ourselves at times strangely bewildered by flashes of light in midnight darkness, when we attempt to thread the intricacies of thought and expression as they lay minutely traced in the poet's mind.

Τούτων ἄδρις εἰμι τῶν ματευμάτων,
Ἐκεῖνα δ' ἔγνω.

However great the difficulty of translating the Prometheus, in the Agamemnon the difficulties multiply upon the translator's path at every step he takes. But these difficulties have been overcome by Mr. Herbert to a greater extent than by any previous translator. We have before us some half dozen versions of as many degrees of merit. The worst of them all, both as to inaccuracy and feebleness, is by T. Medwin, Esq., who

designates himself in the title-page, somewhat ambiguously, as "the *author* of the *Conversations of Lord Byron*." It is not worth while to dwell on this work a moment. Another and much superior work is the translation of this play by Mr. Harford, published in 1831, in a volume elegantly illustrated with designs from Greek vases and other works of art, and containing a valuable dissertation on Grecian Tragedy. Mr. Harford enters fully into the genius of the poet, and shows, by his artistic illustrations, a refined appreciation of the Hellenic spirit, but he is not equal to a uniformly vigorous handling of the work. A previous translation, that of Mr. Symmons, published in 1824, is in most respects admirable. Generally true to the sense of the original, it may be read as a grand original poem; and the critical scholar has occasion to find but few faults with the details of its execution. Last year, an edition was published by Mr. Conington, of University College, Oxford, on the same plan as that of Bœckh's *Antigone*, and Franz's *Agamemnon*, with the Greek text and an English version on the opposite page. It is accompanied with valuable notes, and must be considered an important contribution to the illustration of the play. Mr. Conington's version is not so poetical as either Herbert's or Symmons's; but it is very faithful to the original, and deserves on this account a high place among works of its class. These by no means comprise the whole of Agamemnonian literature, up to the present time. They are, however, sufficient to afford points of comparison by which to judge of Mr. Herbert's success. Here, too, as in the *Prometheus*, we think he has distanced all his competitors. We take, with no special reasons for selection, except that the shortness of the lines enables us to set the extracts side by side, the opening of the first chorus. The reader will notice in the two, the different degrees of condensation.

Herbert.

"Ten years have come, ten years have
flown,
Since Priam's rivals twain,
The strong Atreidai, rushed amain,
King Menelaos, and his fere.
Great Agamemnon, heaven-endowed
With twofold sceptre, twofold throne.
Seaward, with martial rescue loud,
A thousand galleys in their train,
Fierce did they steer,
Shrieking their war-notes stern and
dread,

Symmons.

"Nine years are past, and now the
tenth
Rolls on apace,
Since the chiefs of Atreus' race,
Priam's antagonists,
Each with his sceptre graced, each on
his throne
Seated by Jove, firm yoke of warrior
kings,
Led from this shore their martial train,
A thousand ships, which spread the
main,

Like eagles, o'er their wind-rocked bed
 On oary pinions wheeling high,
 Who hear their ravished nestlings cry,
 Robbed of the fond domestic care
 That linked them to their lofty lair.
 But an avenger soon is found,
 Who hears on high the piercing sound
 Of parents wailing shrill and hollow ;
 Pan, or Zeus, or haply Apollo,
 Who sends upon the sinner's track
 The slow-foot fury never slack.
 So Zeus, on guest-rites aye intent,
 Forth the strong sons of Atreus sent,
 On Paris to avenge his wrong,
 And hers, the oft-espoused wife ;
 Preparing keen and deadly strife,
 With javelins shattered in the thrust,
 And stout knees wrestling in the dust,
 For Greeks and Trojans both. But now
 E'en as it is, it is ; and fate is wroken."
 pp. 83, 84.

The equipage and soldiery of Greece,
 Clanging as they went afar
 The loud embattled cry of war ;
 Like vultures, who have lost their
 cradled young,
 The callow nurslings of their aerie
 steep,
 In mazy melancholy sweep
 With their wings' oary steerage, wheel
 around
 Their desolated beds,
 Mourning apart in deep untrodden
 glades :
 But he who sits supreme,
 Apollo, Pan, or Jove,
 Lists to the wailing of the birds above,
 Each piercing woful scream,
 And sends Erinny's on the felon's heels,
 The after-punisher of outrage past :
 So Atreus' sons, 'gainst Alexander
 false,
 Sends Jove the Hospitable, King of
 Kings,
 Preparing store of struggles fierce
 All along the tented field,
 Fought for the fair twice-ravish'd
 maid :
 Many a limb-relaxing stour
 In battle's heavy noontide hour,
 Limbs with labor overspent,
 Staggering knees in conflict bent
 On the dusty floor of Mars,
 Onsets loud, and shiv'ring spears,
 While Greeks alike and Trojans toil :
 Now all this rage and fierce turmoil,
 All goes e'en now by will of Destiny,
 And Fate must end it, howsoe'er it be."
 pp. 7-9.

We are tempted to present another passage from each ; partly on account of its exquisitely tender and tragic beauty, and partly because the two translators adopt different interpretations of a single sentence ; both, however, being supported by good authorities.

Herbert.

"Her piteous cries to a father's ear,
 Her spotless maidenhood,
 And youthful charms, at nought
 They set, chiefs war-athirst ;
 And, the prayer o'er, that father dear
 Bespake the priestly rout,
 Downcast in all her soul, to lift her high,
 Raised like a kid on the altar-stone to die,
 Swathed with her robes about,
 And gag with speechless force of curbs
 severe
 Her lips love-breathing, that they find no
 tongue
 Cursing her house the rights among.
 Then, pouring o'er the plain her golden
 blood,

Symmons.

"Mailed chiefs, whose bosoms burn
 For battle, heard in silence stern
 Cries that call'd a father's name,
 And set at naught pray'rs, cries, and
 tears,
 And her sweet virgin life and blooming
 years.
 Now when the solemn prayer was
 said,
 The father gave the dire command
 To the priestly band,
 Men with strong hands and ruthless
 force,
 To lift from earth that maiden fair,
 Where she had sunk in dumb despair,
 And lay with robes all cover'd round,

Fair as a pictured maid in beauty's
 prime,
 She pierced each sacrificer's heart
 With pity's dearest dart,
 Shot from her sadly-supplicating eye,
 Striving to speak,—as oft at banquets
 high,
 In the guest-chambers of her father's
 hall,
 She poured her voice ;
 All as she greeted with her fondest lays
 Her dearest sire's thrice-honored happy
 days,
 And bade his age rejoice."

pp. 90, 91.

Hush'd in a swoon upon the ground,
 And bear her to the altar dread,
 Like a young fawn or mountain kid :
 Then round her beauteous mouth to tie
 Dumb sullen bands to stop her cry,
 Lest aught of an unholy sound
 Be heard to breathe those altars round,
 Which on the monarch's house might
 hang a deadly spell.
 Now as she stood, and her descending
 veil,
 Let down in clouds of saffron, touch'd
 the ground,
 The priests, and all the sacrificers round,
 All felt the melting beams that came,
 With softest pity wing'd, shot from her
 lovely eyes.
 Like some imagined pictured maid she
 stood,
 So beauteous look'd she, seeming as she
 would
 Speak, yet still mute: though oft her
 father's halls
 Magnificent among,
 She, now so mute, had sung
 Full many a lovely air,
 In maiden beauty, fresh and fair ;
 And with the warbled music of her voice
 Made all his joyous bowers still more
 rejoice ;
 While feast, and sacrifice, and choral
 song,
 Led the glad hours of lengthen'd day
 along."

pp. 22-24.

Clytemnestra's description of the signal fires from Troy has found several distinguished imitators, particularly Scott, in his *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and Macaulay, in his noble and stirring ballad on the Spanish Armada. It has been separately translated by Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, in his *History of Athens* ; but the effect is greatly injured by the substitution of lyrical rhythms for the iambics of dialogue. Mr. Herbert's version is as follows :—

"Hephaistos, forth from Ida sending light.
 Thence beacon hitherward did beacon speed
 From that fire-signal. Ida to the steep
 Of Hermes' hill in Lemnos ; from the isle
 Zeus' height of Athos did in turn receive
 The third great bale of flame. The vigorous glare
 Of the fast-journeying pine-torch flared aloft,
 Joy's harbinger, to skim the ridgy sea,
 Sending its golden beams, even as the sun,
 Up to Makistos' watch-towers. Nothing loath
 Did he, nor basely overcome by sleep,
 Perform his herald part. Afar the ray

Burst on Euripos' stream, its beacons news
Telling the watchers on Messapion high.
They blazed in turn, and sent the tidings on,
Kindling with ruddy flame the heather gray.
Thence, nought obscured, went up the mighty glow,
And, like the smiling moon, Asopos' plain
O'erleaped, and on Kithairon's rock awoke
Another pile of telegraphic fire.
Nor did the watchmen there, with niggard hand,
Deny the torch, that blazed most bright of all.
Athwart the lake Gorgopis shot the gleam,
Stirring the guards on Aigiplanctos' hill,
Lest it should fail to shine, the appointed blaze.
Kindled with generous zeal, they sent aloft
The mighty beard of flame, that streamed so high
To flash beyond the towering heights which guard
The gulf Saronic. Thence it shot,—it reached
Arachne's cliff, the station next our town ;
Down darting thence to the Atreides' roof,
Child of that fire which dawned on Ida's hill.
Such was the order of the beacons lights
Arranged before, and in succession swift
Each after each fulfilled. The first and last
I' the glittering race is victor. This the proof,
The signal which I tell ye, told to me
By my good lord from Troy."

We doubt not these translations will be warmly welcomed by those lovers of poetry who are classical scholars, and by those who are not. It is a matter of great interest to both alike, that the great writers of the ancient world should be faithfully represented in the literature of the mother tongue. Translation, on just principles, becomes a high art ; and the pleasure which the critical scholar takes in studying a fine version of a classical masterpiece, like this of the Agamemnon, is akin to the delight imparted by a finished production of the imitative arts. To the reader who is not a classical scholar, it opens a new world of beauty ; gives new means and fresh opportunities for æsthetic culture, and enlarges the field of intellectual enjoyment. We earnestly hope Mr. Herbert will be encouraged to proceed in his labor of love, and translate the remaining plays of Æschylus.